



LUCIAN NIEMEYER

RWANDAN REFUGEES: A STORY OF LIFE

March 3 - April 15, 2000

Reception: Friday, March 3, 6 - 9 p.m.

Lecture: Thursday, March 9, 7 p.m.

There is a place in Africa, in Zaire, that is called the *Valley of Death*.

Here on a lava flow when it rains, carbon dioxide gas emits, providing a killing atmosphere for humans. This is where an active volcano spews its sulfur fumes and ashes each day, providing a glow in the sky at night. Thus it was not inhabited but with a few intrepid poor settlers, who eke out a living raising goats and a small garden. Here four months ago, over 200,000 refugees from Rwanda found empty ground and settled their weary, hungry bodies, after walking with their families for months. They fled the genocide and the threat of retaliation from the victorious minority Tutsi army, and they fled with the retreating beaten Hutu army. They fled carrying nothing: no goods, no food, no housing, and no animals to give them sustenance. They came with nothing but the clothes on their backs. They fled in fear. Here in Mugunga, they are packed 10 persons to each 150 square foot area, shoulder to shoulder, camp fire to camp fire, sleeping on black lava rock in small straw hovels covered with plastic sheeting provided by the United Nations, no food, no water, no toilets. You heard the stories of the Cholera epidemic. Water systems provided by members of the international community have resolved the terror of the disease. Now the camp is awaiting the next. It is just too crowded. The outside world has provided food, latrines, water and other life providing services, but the refugees can do nothing, so they mill, gamble and visit. Here a population awaits. There is no work. There is no means of providing. The people, once proud, albeit poor, are statistics waiting to happen. The next epidemic...The rains...An eruption...It is waiting to happen.

Gallery Exhibitions 2000

Abstraction

January 14 - February 26
Curator: Berrisford Boothe

Rwandan Refugees: A Story of Life

Lucian Niemeyer
March 3 - April 15

Allentown Diocese Program

March 3 - March 24

Music & Motion

Lisa Lake
March 3 - 24

Dietmar Herzog,
Artist-in-Residence
March 31 - April 26

Young Artists 2000

April 21 - May 27
Curators: Sue Berkenstock and
Lois Hofschild

South Side Photography

April 28 - May 27
Curator: Sally Handlon

Local Color

June 2 - July 15

Parkland Art League

July 21 - September 2

Lehigh Art Alliance

September 8 - October 21

Outsiders

October 27 - December 9
Curator: TBA

Sine Materia

Valerie Constantino
October 27 - December 9

Banana Factory Artists Annual

December 15 - January 27

Yet in the midst of this human disaster, on a hill, is a beacon of hope. For here run by Esther, a nurse from Nairobi, is an orphanage. Victims of the over 1,000,000 deaths from genocide and Cholera, these children are being taken care of by the angels of mercy. Rwandan and Zaire women, school-teachers, Irish nurses and Irish builders, an Australian engineer. They carved a camp for 458 children out of lava. Here a life giving non-governmental provider has had the vision to create laughter and hope out of misery and death. Each day children arrive with new horror to explain, sullen, hungry. Here comes a girl, 15 years old and Tutsi. Her parents, aunts and uncles were killed in Rwanda. The four brothers and sisters were separated in their flight. The oldest is sick and has been cared for by the 15 year old. She hears that her brothers are in the orphanage and walks from the Kibumba camp 23 miles distant to see if her brothers are in the camp. In a heart wrenching scene they are reunited. The young girl walks back to Kibumba, 23 miles each way, to gather her ill sister and leave to the protection of a soldier to reunite the remains of the family. To what the future...At least they are together. Here, a boy of 8, who walked four months through Rwanda after his family was killed, alone, came. He came starving, diseased and insect infested, not able to vocalize his terror. Here, he has been nourished, his cheeks have been filled out, his legs and body healed. He doesn't laugh yet, but give these angels with their motherly arms and the storytellers



